

VZCZCXRO2734
PP RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDIR
DE RUEHAD #0269 0771310
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 181310Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2261
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 8202

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 000269

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/RA, G/TIP, AND DRL

E.O. 12958: 03/18/2019

TAGS: PREL PHUM KCRM ELAB IR AE

SUBJECT: UAEG THOUGHTS ON NON-OFFICIAL TIP SHELTERS

REFS: A) ABU DHABI 244, B) ABU DHABI 243, C) 08 DUBAI 213, D) 08 ABU DHABI 377, E) 08 DUBAI 092

Classified by Ambassador Richard Olson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador pressed MinState Gargash to support the principle of unofficial TIP shelters in the UAE. Gargash noted that such institutions could not be exempted from strict oversight and would preferably not be associated with diplomatic missions. End summary.

¶2. (C) In a 17 March meeting (other topics septel) the Ambassador pressed Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (and National anti-TIP Committee Chair) Dr. Anwar Gargash for some assurance that a private women's shelter like the City of Hope (CoH) can in principle function in the UAE, noting the complexity of factors involved in a successful anti-TIP effort. Gargash said that he had been asked about CoH the night before in a TV interview (with al-Hurra, which he said also had plans to interview CoH founder Sharla Musabih). Focusing his reply to the Ambassador on accountability, Gargash said humanitarian work did not exempt an organization from administrative and financial scrutiny; one must accept the notion of being audited and run a responsible operation.

¶3. (C) Citing criticism of UAE authorities from the CoH founder, who he found "rather temperamental" to deal with, Gargash said some "flack" is to be expected. The UAE nonetheless has a duty to review procedures for dealing with sensitive humanitarian cases, as it was thoughtfully doing as it set up shelters in Dubai and Abu Dhabi -- with the goal of opening more shelters around the UAE.

¶4. (C) Expanding on NGO activity, Gargash said the UAE's policy is to allow social organizations (by implication, including shelters), but does not want these attached to official diplomatic missions. He used the example of an "Iranian school" as perfectly permissible if not officially connected to the Iranian Embassy; "that's our general policy (he did acknowledge as an exception the US Embassy's association with the American Community School of Abu Dhabi)." The UAE hosts many expatriate communities and welcomes social groups as long as embassies don't organize shelters or clubs, he said (citing the Philippines as an example without acknowledging its over-crowded shelters [ref A] that function without apparent interest shown by the UAE's two "official" shelters [ref B]). Comment: His broad point seemed to be that the UAE was chary of allowing quasi-official institutions to develop under the auspices of diplomatic institutions, and clearly Iran's aggressive support of such institutions is one of the issues in play here. End comment.

¶5. (C) Reiterating the expectation of some "flack" from CoH, Gargash said again that "doing good work" is no excuse for unscrutinized use of publicly collected funds ("the public's funds"). That said, he undertook to continue to look into the matter.

¶6. (C) Comment: The UAEG prefers not only visibility but some measure of procedural oversight of civil society organizations, something it clearly sees lacking in CoH. It is not clear, however, that the UAE has an appropriate mechanism in place (federally or in the individual emirates) to undertake such oversight. Gargash did

not specifically address any allegations of impropriety by CoH (refs C, D, and E). He has also never responded to prior concerns that persons associated with Dubai's official shelter essentially cut off CoH fund raising prospects with a "poison letter" in the fall of 2007 that cautioned potential donors. The CoH's financial woes have been dire since that time. End comment.

OLSON